Sacred Centers

DEVELOPMENT OF A CLASSIFICATORY SCHEME



James J. Preston

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For Dr. Bhabagrahi Misra—
Professor, Colleague and Friend

PREFACE

Since the material in this book first appeared in two different versions elsewhere I have been quite gratified with its reception among scholars of various disciplines both in the West and from South Asia. A classification scheme always has its limitations; but as long as those are kept in mind and the device serves as a useful heuristic tool to assist, rather than hinder, in the task of making complex phenomena more comprehensible, then it has served its purpose. The classification scheme for Hindu sacred centers presented here is not intended to be final or even definitive, since it is recognised that no single person could do justice to such a complex system. Therefore, it is expected that, if the concept of a classification scheme is valid, others will amend and refine it so that it reaches a far more sophisticated maturity than in its present form.

Sacred centers in all the World Religions represent elaborate networks that operate at social, economic and religious levels to help integrate the human experience of the sacred. Anthropologists have been working diligently in recent years to make sense of these very complex and variegated expressions of human culture. As an anthropologist and comparative religionist I have tried to contribute something of value to the systematic study of these complex phenomena, hopefully without falling into the trap of oversimplification. The key to this challenging task is to survey an entire field of religio-cultural behavior and then to discover the various sets of rules that underlie it. This is not to impose order or system where it doesn't exist; but rather it is an effort to bring into clear focus phenomena that would otherwise remain confusing and beyond the pale of social science research.

Hinduism is probably the world's most complex religion. It is extremely rich in its organic expression of the religious life allowing for an extraordinary scope of expressions. Yet, we are not talking about a chaotic array of disconnected religious ceremonies here. There are certain organizing principles which help us to make sense out of diversity. One of these is the principle of "cosmic implosion" which is a fundamental idea shared by all Hindus. Cosmic implosion refers to the Hindu perception that the cosmos is simultaneously both immanent and transcendent; consequently the individual is capable through spiritual discipline to attain glimpses of the true nature of the cosmos through self discipline and a profound understanding of the "Self." This principle, which may seem to be very philosophical and

abstract, finds expression in virtually all concrete dimensions of Hinduism. The creation of sacred images, for instance, involves purification rites performed for the purpose of attracting the cosmos into a particular space and form. *Puja* itself, that crucial core element of Hindu ritual, requires the same process of purification, emptying, and the invitation of "spirit" to descend into matter, through the mediumship of the religious specialist. Sacred centers are believed to be places where this act of divination has occurred over and again. Thus, if we are to understand Hinduism, not only must we explore the nature of this process, but also its manifestations in various contexts. Of course, another major benefit of studying the distribution and organization of Hindu sacred centers for the social scientists, is that they reveal something profound about Indian social organization, reveal elaborate systems of economic exchange, along with the great cultural diversity that becomes organized into a comprehensive whole in what has been called Indian civilization. Hopefully the classification scheme presented here will be helpful in this challenging task.

The contents of this book were first tested out in a receptive audience at the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences held in New Delhi (December 1978). It was subsequently published as part of the proceedings o that meeting in a volume entitled *The Communication of Ideas* edited by J. S. Yadava and Vinayshil Gautam (New Delhi : Concept Publishing Company, 1980). A much revised, and more

accurate version, was then published by the journal *The Mankind Quarterly* (Vol. 20, Nos. 3 & 4, Spring/ Summer 1980 : 259–293). The present version is a combination of the previous two under the general editorship of Dr. Bhabagrahi Misra. I am most grateful to my previous publishers for their assistance in bringing this classification scheme to the attention of scholars in both Western countries and South Asia.

I am grateful to James Freeman, Alan Morinis, Agehananda Bharati, and Donald Messerschmidt for critical responses to various drafts of the manuscript. I am especially indebted to Cora Du Bois for making me conscious of the need to comprehend different levels of Hindu shrines in order to do justice to the study of any single religious institution of India. Also, my appreciation extends to Dr. Bhabagrahi Misra who was my original mentor in the study of Anthropology of Religion and was the first person to draw my attention to Sarala temple in Orissa. Finally, I am deeply indebted to the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment of the Humanities for grant assistance to present the original scheme before the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in New Delhi.

James John Preston

ONE
Introduction

Hindu sacred centers are embedded in complex symbolic networks. Each shrine forms a nexus of ritual, economic, and social activities radiating outward and connecting with other shrines at various levels. These connections are difficult to trace due to the great complexity of the system. The shrines themselves exacerbate this complexity. They range considerably in size, focus of worship, types of devotees, and general ambiance. Permanent spatial and temporal bonds are forged between these shrines through legends, myths, and rites that reinforce and perpetuate shared notions of sacred geography and historical traditions. This system is both fluid and durable with each element forming a crucial part of the overall puzzle. Temples are particularly significant loci, each fitting into the Hindu mosaic in a specific hierarchical position. Thus, linkages among

temples are not only horizontal, but vertical—ultimately connecting the most obscure wayside shrines to the large all South Asian pilgrimage centers.

South Asian specialists have provided numerous binary models to advance the analysis of folk Hinduism; such concepts as Great and Little Traditions, high and low religion, and universalization/particularization among others.[1] These dualistic categories have yielded some intriguing research, but ultimately they are misleading; for Hinduism is not organized along simple lines of opposition between categories invented by Western scholars. Such binary concepts distract from the unitary character of Hinduism. Despite its myriad subsystems, the hallmark of this seemingly kaleidoscopic religion is its essential ability to weave together widely diverse components. As Babb notes, Hinduism is clearly a unified whole :

> The religious life of the Hindus presents itself initially as a bewildering clutter, a quiltwork of

* This study was made possible with the assistance of several scholars who offered constructive suggestions that have been incorporated here. I am particularly indebted to Cora Du Bois, James Freeman, Alan Morinis, Agehananda Bharati, Donald Messerchmidt and Bhabagrahi Misra

1. Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (New York : Praeger Publishers, 1972); Paul Hiebert, *Konduru* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1971); and McKim Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," in *Village India*, ed. McKim Marriott (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1955).

seemingly unrelated rites, ideas, attitudes, and myths. Closer scrutiny, however, yields a very different impression. There are obvious connecting threads—the concern with purity and pollution, the importance of hierarchy, common ritual usages which seem to point to a deeper continuity. The impression of unity is augmented by the fact that the Hindus themselves insist that it is there[2].

It is impossible to attain a unitary view of Hinduism without an adequate understanding of various levels within the system. The religious network involves both sacred shrines and the many festivals that tie them together. These linkages exist 'horizontally', between shrines at any particular level, and 'vertically', through pilgrimage cycles, fairs, and reciprocal festivals.

Unfortunately little systematic research has been conducted on the role of sacred centers in this multi-level phenomenon. Nor is there an adequate mechanism for classifying these shrines; so that the South Asian specialist is unable to place a particular regional or local variant of Hinduism in a wider framework that spans the entire subcontinent. It is hoped this situation may be partially remedied by the classificatory scheme proposed in this study.

2. Lawrence Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1975), p. xv.

TWO

Classification of Hindu Temples

Several attempts have been made to classify Hindu temples according to their place in a South-Asia-wide hierarchy[1]. Srinivas was one of the first to distinguish between different levels of Hinduism, referring to them as local, regional, peninsular, and all India levels[2]. The role of sacred centers in the cultural continuity between rural and urban levels was elaborated eloquently by Redfield & Singer :

> In ancient India, at least, every village & every city had a 'sacred center' with temple, tank and

1. The classification scheme presented here is meant to cover the whole of India, Nepal, some of Sri Lanka and the southern portions of Tibet. The author is indebted to Prof. Donald Messerschmidt for encouragement to extend the scope of this classification to most of the subcontinent beyond India.
2. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (London : Asia Publishing House, 1952).

> garden. ... At each of these levels—of household, village, and city—the 'sacred center' provides the forum, the vehicle, and the content for the formation of distinct cultural identities of families, village, and city[3].

Four cultural levels for India were formulated later by Cohn and Marriott, including (I) all-India, (II) regional, (III) sub-regional, and (IV) local[4]. This scheme can be used for the analysis of general cultural diversity, but has not yet been applied specifically to Indian sacred centes.

One of the most comprehensive attempts to classify Hindu temples is Bharati's elaboration on indigenous classifications of *tirthas* and *pithas*. He proposes three levels of pilgrimage centers, including all-India, regional, and sectarian temples. Bharati contends that "... every shrine is a center of pilgrimage for some"[5]. This stretches the term pilgrimage too far. Countless small temples throughout the subcontinent have little to

3. Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, "The Cultural Role of Cities," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 3, (1954), p. 67.
4. Bernard Cohn and McKim Marriott, "Networks and Centers in the Integration of Indian Civilization." *Journal of Social Research*, 1, No. 1 (1958), p. 1-9
5. Agehananda Bharati, "Pilgrimage in the Indian Tradition," *History of Religions*, 3, No. 1 (1953), p. 135-167; and Agehananda Bharati, "Pilgrimage Sites and Indian Civilization" in *Chapters in Indian Civilization*, ed. Joseph W. Elder, (Dubuque, Iowa : Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1970), I. pp. 85-126.

do with pilgrimage. These shrines are usually less glamorous than pilgrimage temples and are patronized by only a handful of local devotees. It would be misleading to treat them as part of the larger pilgrimage cycles of the subcontinent. Bharati's classification is too loosely defined, and is consequently inadequate as a comprehensive instrument for the analysis of Hindu sacred centers.

Despite this shortcoming, Bharati's work has yielded valuable insights about different purposes served by shrines located at various levels in the hierarchy. He notes, for instance, "... an inverse correlation between the all-India importance of a temple and its deity, and the degree of its specialization"[6]. Bhardwaj substantiates this observation through a well documented study of pilgrimage shrines in north India[7]. While pilgrims attend all-India shrines for general purification, merit and salvation, regional and local shrines are visited for more particular reasons, depending on the specialty of the deity. He found that regional goddess temples, for instance, are mostly attended by pilgrims who desire fertility, abundance, prosperity, and other personal boons from the deity[8]. Bhardwaj is aware of the lack of

6. *Ibid*, p 94.
7. Surinder Bhardwaj, *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1973), pp. 158 & 162.
8. Lawrence Babb also observes that deities concerned with human welfare have wide appeal at larger temples, while local deities are increasingly more specialized at lower levels in the system. See Babb, pp 185-189.

a comprehensive scheme for distinguishing between different levels in the hierarchy. In an admirable effort to correct for this omission he suggests five categories of sacred places . 1) pan-Hindu, 2) supraregional, 3) regional, 4) subregional, and 5) local[9] . Unfortunately he leaves these categories undefined[10].

Thus, South Asian specialists continue to be perplexed by the problem of levels The ethnographer or Indologist has no way of placing his study of a particular shrine within the wider matrix of religious and social institutions in the subcontinent. Nor can network analysis proceed in a vacuum. Social and ritual networks must be understood both in terms of horizontal andvertical levels in the overall system. The social, economic, and ritual networks of the subcontinent are multidimensional, spanning different levels of sociocultural integration. For instance, in the case of folk Hinduism, similar rites may have different meanings depending on their relative locations in the hierarchy. Until we have a better understanding of these levels, network analysis will remain two dimensional.

It is not sufficient to trace the interconnections between institutions, villages, and urban centers. We also need to know how these connections become

9. Bhardwaj, pp 146 & 226

10. Burton Stein, "Goddess Temples in Tamil Country, 1300 1750," unpublished paper 1974, surveyed over 10,000 temples in an effort to trace patterns of historical change. No clear classification system emerges out of this work either. Lawrence Babb does a superb job of outlining the hierarchy of temples in Chhattisgarh (Madhya Pradesh), but offers no workable scheme useful for other investigators, pp. 185-189

transformed, embellished, or reinterpreted at different levels in the system. One place to start is at the institutional base of Hinduism which is composed of a great variety of shrines. It is proposed here that each individual sacred center is connected to a series of shrines of greater and lesser complexity along a continuum. No temple stands alone; each forms a node in a vast multifaceted web.

A few cautionary notes are in order here. The following classificatory scheme is not intended as an *ideal typology* of Hindu temples. Instead, it is conceived to be a heuristic device for placing parts of the system into a larger contextual frame of reference. Hinduism is much too diverse and complex to warrant any rigid typology. Nor is this scheme intended to suggest the relative sacrality of temples; the size or location of a shrine has little to do with its religious importance[11]. Also it should be noted that the complexion of Hinduism varies considerably from one region of the subcontinent to another. Thus, one would expect to find certain significant regional variations in the hierarchical arrangement of temples, as well as in the relationship of one level to another. This is not to suggest it is impossible to construct a South-Asia-wide classificatory scheme. The major contention of this study is

11. This same point has also been made by Bharati, "Pilgrimage Sites," p. 124 and Bhardwaj, p. 97. Nor does distribution of population seem to be an indicator of where to expect pilgrimage shrines. Some heavily populated areas may have no major holy places, as in South Gujarat. See David E. Sopher, "Pilgrim Circulation in Gujarat," *The Geographical Review*, 58, No- 3 (1968), p. 407.

that there is sufficient unity within the overall pattern of Hinduism to warrant the kind of scheme attempted here.

Numerous criteria can be employed to place a shrine within a classificatory scheme for Hindu sacred centers. The most useful would include a temple's scope of geographic influence, its ritual style, the types of worshippers who attended it, its historical and mythological significance as a site, and its relative position in the overall pattern of ritual networks. Also significant are the various ramifications of a shrine within its socio-religious context : What needs does it satisfy among its devotees ? How does it contribute to the economy of the locality ? How are different *jatis* (castes) connected to its festival cycle ?

The following scheme is based on a temple survey conducted in Orissa (1973)[12], but also draws heavily on a wider corpus of information on temples from research conducted by other investigators in different parts of the subcontinent. Table-I defines six levels of South Asian Hindu temples. Each subcategory represents types of shrines found at a specific level in the system. These subcategories are elaborated in Table-II through VI. Shrines that tend to occur at several levels are included in Table VII.

12. See James J. Preston, "Goddess Temples in Orissa : An Anthropological Survey," in *Religion in Modern India*, ed. Giri Raj Gupta (New Delhi : Vikas Publishers, 1980).

TABLE I

CLASSIFICATION OF HINDU SHRINES IN SOUTH ASIA[13]

LEVEL	SUBCATEGORIES	DEFINITION
I. All-South Asian	1) temple cities, 2) major pilgrimage shrines, 3) ancillary shrines, and 4) interstitial shrines.	Attract people from all parts of the subcontinent, are noted in the classical Hindu scriptures and are usually located along the main pilgrimage routes[14].
II. Regional	1) sectarian temples, 2) ethnic shrines, 3) monastic shrines and 4) founder shrines.	Bring together people sharing common interests within a limited, though relatively large part of South Asia. Regional shrines typically attract members of particular sects, language groups, or followers of a holy person.
III. District (subregional)	1) temple-villages 2) tutelary shrines, 3) urban commercial temples, and 4) bazaar shrines	Link local villages, castes, kin, and economic groups to a common sacred geography. These temples are usually within a day's journey and may be easily attended for common purposes during the usual weekly circulation of people within an area.

IV. Local	1) village guardian temples, 2) caste temples, 3) neighbourhood shrines, and 4) nature shrines.	Help fulfil the specific daily needs of devotees, demarcate a local sacred geography, and act as points of reference for villages or neighbourhoods.
V. Domestic	1) household shrines, and 2) domestic festival shrines.	A focus for the religious life of the household or joint family. Usually found in the corner of a room or as a separate shrine set aside in the house or compound with a room of its own.
VI. Multilevel	1) multipurpose shrines, 2) special purpose shrines, 3) *Mela* temples 4) marker shrines 5) mobile shrines and 6) sacred niches	Link the five previous levels together by permeating the whole system. Multilevel shrines specialize in connecting divergent myths, rites, castes, and economic units within the system.

13. Most of the shrines represented in this scheme can be found in both urban and rural settings Only a few temple categories exist exclusively in urban areas, such as bazaar shrines and urban commercial temples.

14. Unlike some of the main pilgrimage centers in Christianity that could be classified as "universal shrines" attracting a large international component of pilgrims, all-South Asian temples seldom attract devotees from outside the subcontinent. Thus, the universal level in Christianity, such as at Mexico's internationally famous shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, is absent in the Hindu system. For levels of Christian shrines see Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1978).



Popular image of Sri Durga.

TABLE—II

ALL SOUTH ASIAN SHRINES[15]

(Level I)

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
1. Temple Cities	A complex of temples forming the nucleus of a sacred city. They are often centers of religious learning and usually have very ancient roots. Temple cities are multifocal centers involving several deities. The location is invariably a crucial market place and ties into the sacred literaure. People attend largely for general purposes, such as purification. All caste Hindus attend from throughout the subcontinent.	Varanasi, Gaya, Kancipuram, Dvaraka, Ayodhya, Mathura, Ujjain and Hardwar.
2. Major Pilgrimage Shrines	These are large sanctuaries which form *main* foci for pilgrimage in the subcontinent. They are usually found at important sites in the sacred geography (mountains, sea shore, or at the confluence of important rivers) and attract	Badrinath, Jagannath (Puri) Kedarnath, Amarnath, Rameswaram, Tirupati,

15. David Sopher observes that large temples in South India do not tend to attract north Indians, p. 410, The same point is made by Agehananda Bharati, "Pilgrimage Sites" pp. 120 & 121. Still, many shrines in South India are known throughout the subcontinent and should be classified at the All-South Asian level.

TABLE II *(Contd.)*

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
	both urban as well as rural populations. Though pilgrims may seek answers to personal problems at these shrines, most people attend for *darsana* of the famous deity. The pilgrimage itself is purifying and meritorious. All caste Hindus attend from throughout South Asia, though higher castes tend to have more access than others.	Pashupatinath, and Muktinath (Himalaya)
3. Ancillary Shrines[16]	Ancillary shrines are associated with major pilgrimage temples. They surround the main focus of worship and may be visited by people for special purposes or attended as part of the general pilgrimage. Virtually all temples have niches. Ancillary shrines are *elaborate* niches at the All-south Asian level where they take on special religious importance. An ancillary deity may play a significant role in the mythology associated with the main deity. These shrines are visited by a large proportion of pilgrims.	At Jagannath temple (Puri) pilgrims visit the ancillary shrines of Subhadra and Balabhadra, sister and brother of Lord Jagannath. The shrine of a god's *consort* is usually attended by pilgrims because of certain special attributes of the deity. Bimala, consort of Jagannath, is a case in point[17].

4. Interstitial Shrines[18]	Interstitial shrines are located along the main pilgrimage routes in the subcontinent. These are tied into the sacred geography as places where divine persons once visited as they journeyed from one part of the subcontinent to another. Although interstitial shrines attract pilgrims from all over the subcontinent at certain times of year, at other times they are supported by regional or local devotees.	Hardwar and Gangotri are often visited on the way to Badrinath. Numerous other examples could be cited in other parts of the subcontinent[19].

16. A term borrowed from Bharati, "Pilgrimage Sites," p. 113.

17 According to the Turners many Christian pilgrimage centers have a *composite* nature; containing not one but a sequence of shrines. See Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, p. 233. Many large pilgrimage places in South Asia are composite complexes of temples. A main temple, plus surrounding ancillary shrines becomes a composite unit of sacred territory.

18. Interstitial shrines may also be called wayside shrines. They are often, though not always, associated with way stations (such as inns, markets, dharmasala along the pilgrim route.

19. Bharati notes the relationship between interstitial shrines and rites of purification during pilgrimage : "After the bath a set number of shrines, tanks, mounds or other relevant landmarks are visitcd, and the priest-guide chants the necessary incantations, as the pilgrim stands by in a reverential mood" ("Pilgrimage Sites," p. 94).

TABLE III

REGIONAL SHRINES

(Level 2)

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
1. Sectarian temples	These are usually large shrines attracting mostly members of a particular Hindu sect. Sectarian temples follow the associated rites related to one dominant deity. Many tantric temples fall into this category.	Cidambaram, Kamakhya, and Brindavan.
2. Ethnic Shrines[20]	Shrines housing deities which symbolize the ethnic identity of a group of people. These are usually very popular and highly attended by a wide variety of Hindus within a region. Some of these temples also attract pilgrims at the all-South Asian level. Ethnic shrines are frequently, though not exclusively, goddess temples[21].	Kanya Kumari, Ma Paudi, Murukan, Kalighat, and Madurai.
3. Monastic Shrines	Monasteries usually attract monks from a particular region. Though the shrines associated with monasteries are largely used by ascetics, pilgrims who stay in monastic guest houses may also attend services Frequently	Sringeri, Puri and Bhubaneswar.

	public festivals will be sponsored by a monastery. These celebrations often attract a wide range of devotees.	
4. Founder Shrines[22]	Closely related to monastic shrines & sectarian temples are shrines associated with the establishment of a particular sect or holy person. These often attract persons of various sects because of the founder's popularity. They may occasionally attract pilgrims from all over South Asia.	Dakineswar Kali (associated with Ramakrishna).

20. See Fred W. Clothey, "Pilgrimage Centers in the Tamil Cultus of Murukan," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 40, No. 1 (1972), pp. 72-95, for an excellent description of six pilgrimage centers in South India. Though the cult of Murukan described by Clothy is ethnic, it has *both* Sanskrit and Tamil roots which complement one another "Murukan's current popularity in small measure is derived from the fact that the god has been so thoroughly identified with Tamil Nadu Tamil Nadu is the god's domain; the six centers are *cakras* which sacralize the region In stressing the Tamilness of Murukan, his devotees find a sense of their identity as Tamilians." pp. 93 & 94.

21. An interesting comparison can be made here with regional level Christian shrines in Mexico where Our Lady of Zapopan is a focus of unity for the Hispanic, criollo, mestizo, and Indian populations of the state of Jalisco (The Turners, *Image and Pilgrimage*, p. 53) Also, ethnic shrines are found throughout world Christianity. "Within each country one can detect a loose hierarchy, or at least a rough scale of priorities among its shrines. In plural societies, each linguistic or ethnic group has its favored pilgrimage places" (*Ibid*, p. 6). Ethnic shrines exist in many parts of South Asia, though in some places (such as Gujarat) they are conspicuously absent. David Sopher, p. 410.

22. The Turners refer to shrines directly related to the life of a founder and his followers as "prototypical" (*Ibid*, p. 163). This terminology is not appropriate in the South Asian context because what we have called "founder shrines" here are not necessarily places to commemorate the events in the life of the founder, as would be the case for Christian pilgrimage centers in Palestine where Jesus's life, mission, and death are recalled by pilgrims.

TABLE IV

DISTRICT SHRINES[23]

(Level 3)

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
1. Temple-Villages	These are villages entirely structured around the activities of an important district temple. In a way the village and the temple are inseparable, as the village is primarily composed of castes who receive land or paddy in return for services rendered to the temple. These temples "...dominate the economic, political, and ritual life of the villagers"[24]. Temple-villages attract a wide range of district devotees from many castes. They are frequently associated with a major market place. The myths and rites surrounding the deity featured in a temple-village are somewhat unique. This creates an impression of special reverence and importance for the shrine and its surrounding village. Thus, a temple-village is not only a structural composite that integrates different social groups within a single village, it is also a symbolic nexus of myths and rites which extend beyond the village into the surrounding district—demarcating that area with a certain degree of special sanctity and uniformity of religious customs.[25]	Sarala (Orissa) and Kapileshwar (Orissa).

2.	Tutelary Shrines	Many of the *rajas* of South Asia had a tutelary deity (often a goddess). The temple of this deity was located either within the palace, or more frequently in a strategic location at the center of the kingdom. These temples still exist in parts of the subcontinent and remain important foci of common rites shared at the district level. Some tutelary shrines have developed into large institutions, attracting pilgrims from the surrounding region. Others have lost their tutelary significance and have become transformed into special purpose shrines.	Bhattarika (Orissa)[26].

23. Districts are subregional complexes of villages and urban centers which form relatively tight-knit social, trade, and ritual bonds among the inhabitants. The term does not necessarily refer to political subdivisions.

24. James Freeman, *Scarcity and Opportunity in an Indian Village* (Menlo Park, Calif. : Cummings Publishing House, 1977).

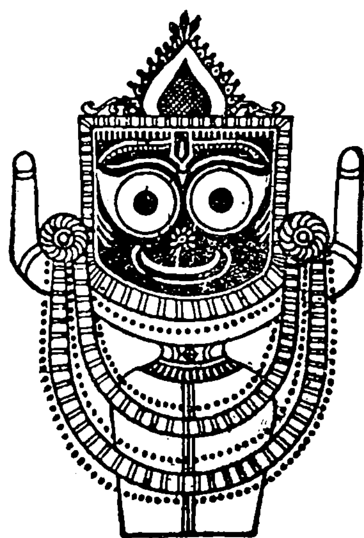
25. I am indebted to Dr. Bhabagrahi Misra who first used the term "temple-village" during personal conversations (1970) related to Orissan temples. James Freeman, "Religious Change in a Hindu Pilgrimage Center," *Review of Religious Research*, 16. No. 2, p. 124, uses the same term with reference to his study of Kapileswar temple in Orissa. However, it has never been defined by any one.

26. Most tutelary deities in Tamil Nadu are *amman* or mother goddesses. See Burton Stein, "Goddess Temples."

TABLE IV *(Contd)*

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
3. Urban Commercial Temples	These temples do not depend on income from rented land for support. They are linked into the commercial economy of an urban center and draw large numbers of devotees from the surrounding district. Their ritual activities are focused on modern popular folk festivals that have expanded in recent years in many of India's cities.	Chandi (Cuttack)[27]
4. Bazaar Shrines	These shrines are usually particular to urban centers. Bazaar shrines attract people from both the local neighborhood and the surrounding district. They thrive on patronage from people engaged in trade. Little research has been conducted on bazaar shrines, despite the fact they are so numerous.	Most bazaars in South Asian cities have several temples that are contiguous to the main center of economic exchange.

27. See James J. Preston, "Commercial Economy of an Urban Temple in India," in *Community, Self, and Identity*, ed. Bhabagrahi Misra and James Preston (The Hague : Mouton Publishers, 1978) and James J. Preston, *Cult of the Goddess* (New Delhi : Vikas Publishers, 1980.)



Lord *Jagannath*.
Puri (ORISSA)

TABLE V

LOCAL SHRINES

(Level 4)

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
1. Village Guardian Temples	These temples are found in most villages. In south and eastern India village guardian deities tend to be goddesses. Frequently this is the most significant temple in a village, but sometimes the village guardian temple is small and insignificant compared to other shrines. The guardian deity protects the village from disease, natural disasters, and unpleasant outsiders. Patronage is almost exclusively local & varies significantly from village to village.	In south India each village has a guardian deity or *grama devata*[28].
2. Caste Temples	Clan and caste temples have been noted throughout the subcontinent. These are particularly widespread in South India, attracting ritual homage from most members of a kin group[29]. Non-Brahman priests may preside at these temples, particularly where a lower caste is affiliated with the shrine. Occasionally these temples attract caste members at the district level.	Untouchable castes often have their own shrines, particularly in villages where they are numerous. Dominant castes have their own temples[30].

3. Neighborhood Shrines	Most villages, towns, and cities in South Asia have neighborhood shrines. They provide a focus of worship near the home These shrines are almost exclusively patronized by members of the neighborhood. They may be subsidiary or ancillary to a dominant village or urban temple. In most cases, however, neighborhood shrines provide identity to a group of persons, and demarcate certain characteristics of sacred geography located within the village or town.	Neighborhood shrines thrive in Cuttack (Orissa) during Durga Puja where most celebrations are focussed on elaborate rituals performed in the streets of the city[31].
4. Nature Shrines	These are small, uncovered structures housing a deity associated with the fertility of crops & worshipped by field laborers and landlords. They are linked into a sacred geography, like marker shrines, but are usually of less significance. Nature shrines do not have regular ceremonies. Patronage is confined to a few local persons.	The paddy fields in South Asia are scattered with numerous nature shrines. Also *Svayambhu Siva lingas* may be found 'growing' in part of a village[32].

28. Burton Stein, "Devi Shrines and Folk Hinduism in Mediaeval Tamilnad," in *Studies in the Language and Culture of South Asia*, ed. Edwin Gerow and Margery Lang (Seattle : 1973) p. 79.
29. Stein, "Goddess Temple," p. 2..
30. *Ibid*, p. 25
31. For a discussion of the distribution of *prasad* in neighborhood ceremonies associated with Ganesh (in Madhya Pradesh) see Babb, pp. 62 & 63.
32. The link between local deities and natural phenomena is evident in most South Asian villages. "Particular locations are frequently identified as an abode of a deity, and are marked with stones, and/or offerings of flowers, food, drinks, and cloth." Robert J Miller, "Village Religion," in *Lectures in Indian Civilization*, ed. Joseph W. Elder (Dubuque, Iowa : Kendall/Hunt Publishing House), p. 333.

TABLE VI

DOMESTIC SHRINES

(Level 5)

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
1. Household Shrines	Virtually every Hindu household has a room or part of a room set aside for worship. This usually contains the traditional deities. Rituals are performed every day in devout families.	Shrines devoted to the family *ista devata*.
2. Domestic Festival Shrines	On special ceremonial occasions a priest may be invited into the household to perform holy rites. Either a family member or the priest constructs a special place of worship (often in the courtyard) where the ceremony takes place. Members of the extended family may be invited to participate in these events.	Shrines constructed on special occasions inside the domicile by women during Laksmi Puja.

TABLE VII

MULTILEVEL SHRINES

(Level 6)

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
1. Multipurpose Shrines	Hindu temples that have no *primary role* in the religious system, but are clearly multidimensional in focus can be classified as multipurpose shrines. Many of the large pilgrimage shrines in the subcontinent simultaneously integrate various elements of ritual, social, and economic activity among devotees. These shrines have no single *primary role* in the religious system. Nor are all multipurpose shrines large sacred centers. They may be found at any level. It would not be accurate to maintain that all Hindu shrines are multipurpose. Most sacred shrines clearly demonstrate a *primary role*, despite the not infrequent additional secondary or minor purposes they serve.	Muktinath (Nepal, Himalaya) simultaneously attracts pilgrims from throughout the subcontinent, is associated with an important *mela* and serves as a focus of Nepali ethnic identity. Pilgrimage to this shrine serves several purposes of equal importance – ,ethnicity, trade and commerce, fun, and religious ritual[33].

33. This information on Muktinath was contributed by Dr. Donald Messerschmidt (Washington State University), personal communication.

TABLE VII *(Contd.)*

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
2. Special purpose Shrines	Perhaps the most ubiquitous temples in the subcontinent are those devoted to special purposes. These are often goddess temples associated with the cure of illnesses fertility, increased crop yield, treatment of bovine diseases, etc. Special purpose shrines attract large number of persons from all castes and are usually located within a day's journey. A survey of any particular district in South Asia would yield a wide variety of special purpose shrines available to the population. The specialty featured usually matches the needs of people living in a particular area.	Certain goddesses are well-known for their ability to cure diseases (Sitala and Mangala)[34].
3. Mela Temples	*Melas* (fairs with religious overtones) are found throughout the subcontinent. The temples associated with such *melas* may be either constructed for temporary use or they may be established shrines that sponsor the event. *Melas* may occur each year or every sixth or twelfth year (as in the case of *kumbha melas*). Mela temples revert to a narrower patronage for most of the year. Some *melas* attract people from all over the subcontinent (such as those held at Allahabad, Hardwar and Nasik).	Mahadev temple (Cuttack), Sonepur (Bihar) and Gangasagar (Bengal)[35].

For the most part *melas* are regional or district level in scope and have a strong element of commercial trade, with the temple supplying a religious framework for festivals.

4. Marker Shrines

The entire subcontinent is richly endowed with multiple levels of sacred geography. Each district has its sacred rivers, mountains, caves, lakes, and ponds that are woven into an intricate pattern of folklore and mythology. These places are almost inevitably endowed with marker shrines devoted to an associated deity. Such shrines often become foci for festivals that celebrate and reinforce the mythology which demarcates the sacrality of a particular place.

River goddesses are found in many parts of the subcontinent. These are usually marker shrines. Mountain lakes or *dudh pokharis* ('milklakes') are widespread objects of pilgrimage in the Himalayan regions of South Asia[36].

34. M. N. Srinivas, *The Remembered Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 19 & 20, describes a division of labor among village deities in terms of their specific utility in the lives of villagers. Special purpose shrines are also found in Christianity. The healing of illness is a major role of pilgrimage shrines. The Turners have called these shrines the "doctors of the poor," *Image and Pilgrimage*, p. 194.
35. For a description of *melas* and associated temples in the region of Madhya Pradesh, see Babb, pp, 64 & 65.
36. Donald Messerschmidt, personal communication.

TABLE VII *(Contd.)*

SUBCATEGORIES	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
5. Mobile Shrines (temporary)	There are several kinds of mobile shrines found in the practice of folk Hinduism. Temporary shrines are built for festival purposes and carried through village or neighborhood streets. Mobile shrines may be constructed during *Melas*. Often mobile shrines are carried from village to village by wandering mendicants and their followers. Though these shrines attract a local population, they are also found at higher levels in the spectrum of Hindu sacred centers.	Neighborhood women construct temporary shrines on village roadsides during certain festivals.
6. Sacred Niches	Virtually all shrines in the subcontinent are surrounded by sacred niches. These small sacred centers are often embued with considerable sanctity and personal meaning for devotees. They are found at all levels in Hinduism.	Various niches with incarnations of Visnu, the Sapta-Matrikas and Hanuman are typical.

Despite its limitations, the scheme presented above is offered as a point of departure for refining methods of analysis. While it is recognized that some of the sub-categories of shrines presented in this scheme may be found at several levels in the system, each category has been placed at the level where it occurs most frequently. There is nothing incongruous about the fact that shrines at the all-South Asian and regional levels intersect several levels for different purposes. This helps to make them lasting, viable institutions. In spite of this occasional overlapping, each category of shrines enumerated here clearly fits into one level more accurately than another. For instance, the fact that many of the all-South Asian shrines have local, district and regional components need not detract from their *primary role* at the highest level in the religious network. Thus, this classificatory scheme is deliberately designed to acknowledge and incorporate the multi-dimensional nature of the phenomena at hand, while focusing specifically on the *primary role* of each institution. It is a model meant to be used as a frame of reference for comparison and prediction, not as an ideal description of the actual reality. No doubt such models increase in utility the closer they approximate the phenomena they are intended to simulate. However, the significant point to remember, is that we are presently without any adequate, well elaborated, and systematic methodology for the analysis of different levels within folk Hinduism.

Some sacred centers occur invariably throughout the entire religious network at many different levels. Such multilevel shrines have been ranked separately in the

scheme and include the following subcategories : 1) multipurpose shrines, 2) special purpose shrines, 3) *mela* shrines, 4) marker shrines, 5) mobile shrines, and 6) sacred niches (all presented in Table VII). There are two kinds of multilevel shrines : (a) *variegated* and (b) *connective*. *Variegated multilevel shrines* tend to occupy central locations in the temple hierarchy, as nodes in the religious network. These shrines incorporate a variety of major currents in Hinduism by weaving together a variegated pattern of themes. The temple of Biraja at Jajpur in Orissa is an excellent example of a variegated multilevel shrine. Here the goddess incorporates five main sects of Orissan Hinduism : Vaisnava, Saiva, Shakta, Ganapatya, and Saura. The temple has both a *trisula* (Saiva) and a *chakra* (Vaisnava) at the top. Biraja is considered to be simultaneously the Great Mother and Lord Jagannath; she is also both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. (Goat sacrifices are conducted within the temple compound, but with the doors of the main shrine closed[37]). Thus, multilevel variegated shrines such as this one incorporate numerous divergent sectarian traditions through a process of symbolic inclusiveness. Multipurpose shrines, *mela* shrines, and sacred niches can be classified as variegated forms of multilevel shrines. The *connective variety* of multilevel shrines are much more numerous. These shrines form part of the connective tissue that knits the temple hierarchy together. They are found at various levels in the system, and help to *connect* these levels together by 1) demarcating specific

37. See Preston, "Goddess Temples."

places in the sacred geography that form portions of a larger mythic tradition (marker shrines), 2) fulfilling special needs of devotees within a region (special purpose shrines such as those of disease deities, fishing communities, etc), and 3) moving between villages, towns, or neighborhoods (mobile shrines).

Multilevel sacred centers differ from others with regard to their primary role in the overall system. While some religious institutions (like ethnic shrines) tend to be perpetuated and maintained at one level, others link various levels together and even, in some cases, alternate from one time of the year to another in terms of scope of influence. Multilevel shrines may also have more than one focus of worship[38]. The composite and multifocal purpose of such sacred centers maximizes the participation of devotees, either simultaneously or sequentially, in various levels of social, psychological, and sacral experience. Like carnival in Latin America, such multilevel phenomena present the participant with a range of experiences that ultimately culminate in a major unifying event. At first he may wander in and out of major or subordinate events, but ultimately these all lead to a primary focus that ties the divergent elements together in a dominant theme.

This variegated nature of some multilevel sacred centers can be best illustrated in the case of *mela* temples.

38 The Turners have observed the same multifocal quality of certain European pilgrimage centers, such as St. Patrick's Purgatory in Ireland. *Image and Pilgrimage*, p. 113.

While *melas* (fairs) often have religious overtones, some are more secular than others. As Sopher notes :

> "...... travel to *melas* may be classed as religious, non-religious, or both, depending on the character of the *mela* and the informant's statement[39]."

Temples associated with *melas* are sometimes independent of the event, and would not be classified in the present scheme as multilevel shrines. Others rely considerably on the large number of devotees attracted, whenever the *mela* takes place during the year. These shrines are dependent on the *mela* for survival and play a significant role in the ritual activities associated with the event. Such sacred centers which have been classified as *mela* temples may expand or contract in scope of influence, depending on numerous factors such as the popularity of the *mela* at different historical periods, its locus in the regional, district or local sacred geography, and the extent of confounding variables relating the *mela* to certain sects, historical personages, or mythic traditions. Sometimes *mela* temples are temporary structures, specifically built for the duration of the *mela*. Others are permanent sacred centers, attended poorly during most of the year, but expanding their clientele extensively during the course of the fair. *Melas* occur at all levels in the ritual network, connecting social, economic and

39. Sopher, 393 & 398.

symbolic dimensions of life into the larger framework of Hinduism.

Mahadev temple in Cuttack city, Orissa, is best classified as a *mela* temple. This shrine, located on the banks of the Mahanadi river in Orissa's largest city, has an average attendance of 10 to 15 persons per day during most of the year. Mahadev temple becomes the center of a storm of activity at the time of the *mela* held here for five days every year, when several thousand persons attend services. Hundreds of people spend the night in the temple's *dharmasala* and participate in both cultural and religious ceremonies. The fair attracts approximately 100,000 persons from the surrounding region and a few visitors from as far away as Calcutta.

The *mela* held on the fairgrounds adjacent to Mahadev temple has a strong economic and commercial component. There are hundreds of stalls selling food, special sweets, and drinks. Every major neighborhood of merchants is represented. Furniture, silver jewelery, and many different cottage industries are featured with vendors from villages outside of Cuttack city selling numerous items. Government and large corporations have stalls displaying various aspects of Orissa's economic development. There are many forms of entertainment, including magic shows and dramatic performance of the *Mahabharata*.

The focus of the *mela* occurs on the day of ***Bali Yatra,*** a festival celebrated throughout coastal Orissa.

At dawn thousands of small toy boats containing ghee lamps are floated on the river. It is said that this rite commemorates earlier trade by sea with South east Asia. Fireworks are set off near the water and there is a strong festive atmosphere. At this time large number of people attend Mahadev temple, for it is believed by some participants that Chaitanya, the Bengali saint, crossed the Mahanadi river here, on his way to Puri. Thus, this *mela* is associated with two separate traditions, one cultural *(Bali Yatra),* the other religious (commemorating Chaitanya's legendary visit to this site). Here two mythic traditions converge. Mahadev temple benefits from the *mela* which has strong religious, cultural, and commercial overtones. The many beggars, merchants, celebrants, entertainers, and fun-seekers who attend the *mela* transform this quiet local shrine and its picturesque setting into a center of festive activity that attracts people from both district and regional levels. Thus, Mahadev temple must be classified, like so many other *mela* temples in the subcontinent, as a multilevel shrine, operating at various levels within the system on different occasions.

THREE
Vertical Bonds in the Hindu Religious System

Now that six different levels of Hindu temples (and numerous subcategories) have been defined, it is appropriate to discuss the connective relationships between these levels. Two vital questions are immediately evident : 1) How are the levels linked together vertically ? 2) What causes the transformation of a temple as it evolves from one level in the hierarchy to another ? Vertical bonds are maintained between shrines at different levels in the system through the institution of pilgrimage, commerce and trade, reciprocal rites between shrines, the perpetuation of historic and mythic traditions, wandering medicants and caste occupations.

The most important of these linkages between levels is the many major and minor pilgrimage cycles in the subcontinent. Bharati has written extensively on pilgrimage, noting that it has both real and metaphorical implications :

> What is common to all pilgrimage anywhere is the hope for and the belief in some of merit, some sort of achievment which cannot be attained by other means; but even the statement that all pilgrimage entails physical movement, travel, circumambulation, etc., which sounds like a tautology, has to be modified, as Indian terms for pilgrimage are often to be understood metaphorically, as when a *yogi* (a contemplative adept) 'perfoms' a 'pilgrimage' *(yatra)* to the seven 'shrines' *(tirtha)* by a specific type of meditation, during which he stays but, physically[1] .

Technically Bharati is correct in reminding us that pilgrimage extends beyond the actual circulation of people among shrines; but a discussion of the metaphorical dimension of pilgrimage is outside the scope of this study.

Pilgrimage extends individuals beyond the parochial (domestic and local) levels of life into wider spheres of

1. Bharati, "Pilgrimage Sites," p. 85.

religious confluence at district, regional, and all South-Asian levels. Aziz considers pilgrimage to be an encounter between the individual and his geography,

> "...a cultural mode by which people express their personal identification with the continent...the means by which geography is made a part of their psyche and their culture[2] .

Pilgrimage is consequently more than a social and cultural phenomenon, and for some participants it is also a process of withdrawal from daily social engagement in order to reidentify with the earth and cosmos[3] . It is a dual process, for though the individual is linked through pilgrimage to higher and higher levels in the larger religious network, he also returns to his home village with new ideas that influence the local tradition. Today, with increased opportunities for travel, pilgrimage cycles appear to be widening and becoming available to more people. This would imply a more rapid rate of transfusion of religious customs throughout the sub-continent, but sufficient research has not been completed to prove this point.

What exactly is transmitted by pilgrimage between levels along the continuum of Hindu sacred centers ?

2. Barbara Aziz, "Quest and the Meaning of Pilgrimage," unpublished paper read at the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, New Delhi, India, December, 1978, pp. 17 & 18.

3. *Aziz*, p. 18.

More is involved than a dialectic between the grassroots of folk Hinduism and the classical Sanskritic tradition. Not only individuals, but *jatis* (castes) and classes of persons, who may otherwise be isolated from each other, are mixed together as they journey upward and outward from localities, then return through the pilgrimage cycle. Of equal importance is a large amount of trade and commerce reinforced by the intricate network of festivals linked into pilgrimage[4]. Turner has observed a similar economic component in Christian pilgrimage :

> A multitude of pilgrim routes converge on a great shrine, each route lined with sacred way stations (chapels, abbeys, shrines, etc.) and such service institutions as hospices, hospitals, inns, markets, and taverns. The major shrines exert a magnetic effect on the whole communications and transportation system, charging with sacredness many of its features, and fostering the construction of sacred and secular edifices to serve the needs of the human stream passing through it. Pilgrimage centers in fact generate a socioeconomic "field;" they have a kind of social "entelechy"[5] .

Thus, pilgrimage becomes a mechanism by which an individual or group can make a journey in societies

4. The economic side of pilgrimage and the patronage of temples has received surprisingly little attention from South Asian specialists.
5. The Turners, *Image and Pilgrimage*, p. 233 & 234.

with few opportunities for economic movement away from limited circles of family, friends and neighbors[6]. Through pilgrimage the individual's sense of separate ethnicity is reinforced as he comes in contact with diverse languages and customs, but finally this experience of separateness is dissolved in the hierarchy. People at one level, for instance, gain a sense of uniqueness by identifying with a particular local tutelary deity, at another level such as regional or all-South Asian this uniqueness is dissolved into the larger religious whole, which for a time, suspends narrower, more parochial sentiments. As the pilgrim gains merit as he journeys upward in the network of Hindu sacred centers, he can simultaneously identify with local roots, while also transcending them. This dual process was well understood by the rajas, who sought to extend secular authority through "universalizing" a local tutelary deity, and northern Brahmans were frequently imported into Orissa from Kanyakubja to add luster and respectability to the local kingdoms. This example is one of many which can be found to illustrate centuries of complementarity between secular and sacred domains, a process which continues today as local shrines become absorbed, transformed, expanded, and reintegrated at higher and higher levels within the network of sacred centers.

Despite its dynamic complexity and flexibility, Hinduism is a stable system. Part of this stability is due to

6. *The Turners*, p. 7.

the institution of pilgrimage which like a glue holds together what might otherwise tend to splinter and fragment. There is no rigid or formal ecclesiastical hierarchy in this polymorphic religion. Diverse linguistic, cultural, and mythic components of the system remain intact because of continuous interaction between various levels through the process of pilgrimage circulation. Underlying all of this, of course, is a common principle shared by every Hindu — *toleration for the diversity of paths to the one ultimate reality.* Syncreticism is attained through weaving together divergent religious themes into constantly finer patterns of symbolic integration as the pilgrim circulates throughout the system. This capacity of Hinduism to sustain itself by allowing for parallel existence between disparate world view[7] is reflected in the manner by which diverse sacred shrines are entwined together as a unified network.

What about other links within the system, besides those provided by pilgrimage ? Once again tolerance for diversity provides a key. Though certain consistent prototypes for religious behavior permeate folk Hinduism at every level, there is much room for embellishment and elaboration. Unique local versions of the classical Hindu scriptures are found in many regions of South Asia, where they are perpetuated in both written vernaculars and oral traditions. The Indian religious

7. David M. Miller and Dorothy C. Wertz, *Hindu Monastic Life* (Montreal : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976) ,p. 200.

mind is averse to any sort of formal or rigid institutionalization[8]. There is no single dogmatic piece of literature rooted in a sacralized history as in the Christian Biblical tradition. Every *jati* (caste) and *upajati* (subcaste) can project its own life conditions into local ritual and mythic traditions. Furthermore, the priestly castes at the larger sacred centers, rather than suppressing and ridiculing these diverse parochial elements, tend to assimilate them under an elaborate set of overarching myths and rites. The classical Sanskrit literature reinforces this assimilation by providing a broad range of minor folk themes, woven into the classical texts, and freely elaborated at local and district levels.

Finally, there are strong *jati* (caste) links connecting different levels of the system together. Brahmans are not the only *jati* responsible for providing links between levels in the hierarchy. Many *jatis* are involved with the yearly cycle of temple festivals. Through intermarriage, the visiting of kin, and the sharing of mutual obligations, different *jatis* interact at various levels; ultimately tying domestic, local, district, regional, and all-South Asian shrines into a continuous social and religious network. Orissa's famous Jagannath temple illustrates this point. Virtually every temple in Orissa is associated with persons who have either direct or indirect ties with the shrine at Puri. Jagannath temple has a wide variety of *jatis* and *upajatis* involved in its elaborate rites,[9] whose

8. Bharati, "Pilgrimage in the Indian Tradition," p. 150

9. Non-Brahman *Jatis* (castes) play an important role in the services conducted at Jagannath temple. These non-Brahman temple servants have been noted throughout South Asia. For a discussion of non-Brahmans in south Indian goddess shrines see Stein, "Goddess Temples," p. 28.

members intermingle with members of related *jatis* at other Orissan shrines. Also, throughout coastal Orissa, the *mahaprasad* from Jagannath temple is distributed among the surrounding sacred centers by emissaries with kin who live in these regions. Another vertical bond is forged between smaller shrines and the center at Puri through the custom of building small ancillary shrines of Jagannath within the compounds of most Orissan district temples.

We have already noted how vertical connections are established between shrines through pilgrimage circulation, *jati* ties, and mythic bonds that link lower level temples with those at regional, and in some cases, all-South Asian levels in the hierarchy. Other bonds between levels can be suggested, but these have not been researched sufficiently to provide any clear idea of the extent or type of role they play in the overall system. For instance, wandering mendicants, drama troupes, and tourists are bearers of both religious and cultural traditions that must contribute in some way, as yet undetermined, to the systemic linkages. And though it is quite clear that commercialism enters into the formula in the form of economic bonds established all along the hierarchical continuum of shrines, our knowledge of these factors remains rudimentary. Even more significant is the poverty of good ethnographic studies of Hindu temple complexes. This missing data renders our knowledge of ritual links between levels weak. Everyone who has conducted research in South Asia is aware of connections that extend beyond a particular religious institution, or temple complex, but very few

investigators have pursued and sketched out these vital links in the system[10].

The question asked earlier about how temples evolve from one level to another is complex. Most studies of Hindu shrines trace patterns of change within a single institution, with no adequate framework for presenting a comparative analysis of the phenomenon. The role of a temple can only be determined by intensive research, including familiarity with associated pilgrim cycles, studies of devotee profiles, priests, and temple patrons. Such research needs to be conducted on more shrines. The hierarchical model presented here should provide such a point of reference. Once the investigator has determined where the shrine he is studying fits into the larger picture, it will be possible to predict its direction of development. A wide range of such studies should yield enough data to create at least a rough sketch of the Hindu religious network. At present the ethnology of Hinduism is full of gaping holes, with little high level theory, and few attempts to understand the whole system in a single comprehensive framework. The next step to be taken towards this goal is to generate

10. Several recent studies are attempting to remedy this situation. See Baidyanath Saraswati, *Kashi· Myth and Reality of a Classical Cultural Tradition* (Simla : Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1975) : Anncharlott Eschmann, et al , *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (New Delhi : Manohar Publications, 1978); L. P. Vidyarthi, et al , *The Sacred Complex of Kashi : A Microcosm of Indian Civilization* (New Delhi : Concept Publishing Co., 1979); and Surajit Sinha and Baidyanath Saraswati, *Ascetics of Kashi* (Benares : N. K. Bose Memorial Foundation, 1978).

interesting research projects that will 1) fill present glaring ethnographic gaps, 2) perfect a comprehensive temple scheme, and 3) stimulate meaningful hypotheses to be tested empirically.

FOUR

New Modes For Analysis

It might be argued that the construction of a temple scheme that omits the larger encompassing religious system is a futile exercise. Of course, such an objection would be valid if we were presenting this model of levels in the hierarchy of Hindu sacred centers as a mechanism for revealing the most essential principles operative in Hinduism. While it is correct to assert that the temple hierarchy is only part of a larger encompassing system, this does not preclude an analysis of temples as key institutions—a task that is absolutely essential for the ethnological study of Hinduism. Hopefully a deeper understanding of the institutional base of Hinduism can

help to shed light on more fundamental principles that form the essential paradigms of Hindu religious thought[1].

Sacred centers are elements in socioreligious fields, connecting people of different regions to a common thread of tradition. Temples cannot be understood as isolates; either spatially separate from other shrines, or without regard to their historical place in the religious system. Thus, the socioreligious field is composed of both temporal and spatial dimensions. The religious network in Hinduism consists of festivals, deities, and sacred centers. Temples are key elements in this network. Though the temple hierarchy outlined earlier represents only one facet of Hinduism, it is significant one, because temples provide the religion with an institutional framework for the expression of worship, pilgrimage, and the manipulation of sacred symbols.

The scheme for the analysis of Hindu sacred centers suggests some new directions for future research. For instance, little has been written about middle-range shrines (at the regional and district levels). What role do they play in pilgrimage cycles, as centers of ethnicity, or in reinforcing social and economic relations among *jatis* (castes). Even our knowledge of all-South Asian

1. The author wishes to thank Dr. Alan Morinis for pointing out the significant task of determining the paradigmatic principles of Hinduism; no doubt a rather ambitious adventure that extends beyond the scope of any temple scheme.

shrines is scanty and inadequate. What relationship do these major pilgrimage temples share with sacred centers located at lower levels in the network ? Also how does a shrine become all-South Asian in scope ? Are some temples today evolving in that direction ? And why do some all-South Asian level shrines decline ? Turning to lower levels in the spectrum, it is evident, much work is still to be done, despite numerous studies conducted on local (village) level temples and domestic (household) shrines. How do these fit into the *overall* scheme ? Is there, as some scholars have suggested, really such a clear cut opposition between these lower level shrines and those at higher levels ? Or is there a degree of continuity throughout the system that escapes us because of missing information ? And what are the changes taking place in household shrines as people modernize ? Are such changes also being reflected in other temples in the spectrum ? Perhaps the most important question has to do with the relationship of the South Asian network of religious institutions to broader problems such as loss of patronage and bankruptcy in some temples. Many shrines have relied on income from "temple lands" which no longer supply sufficient funds to maintain traditional ritual services[2]. What are the implications of new patterns of patronage ? More systematic work needs to be done on the role of population density, charismatic popularizers, diligent temple touts, and geographical location as factors in determining the level of a shrine within the hierarchy of Hindu sacred centers.

2. See James J. Preston, "Commercial Economy."

Perhaps the temple scheme presented in this study will help to focus more discussion and research on these and other problems.

Sacred centers do not include established temples alone. Research needs to be conducted on sacred centers *without* shrines, such as ponds, lakes, rivers, caves, and mountains. Virtually any place in the subcontinent can be designated a sacred center. Since there is no way of approving the sacrality of a place by ecclesiastical means, the system remains fluid and open to free elaboration. It is rare to find such flexibility still extant in the great world religions. A better understanding of the principles that allow such flexibility to flourish could tell us something about how religions have evolved and survived major crises.

None of the research suggested here is possible without a deeper comprehension of the nature of networks. The key to folk Hinduism as for other phenomena related to complex societies, is to refine our methods for network analysis. Srinivas devotes considerable attention to network analysis as an important method for studying the complexity of South Asian life. He asserts that a network in the subcontinent "...ramifies in every direction, and, for all practical purposes, stretches out indefinitely." Economic, political, and ritual networks may operate independently of each other as they "...cut across the boundaries of communities and corporate groups, and in fact, serve to articulate them to wider

social systems"[3]. Through network analysis the larger patterns of South Asian civilization emerge and become more clear to the investigator. The temple scheme presented in this study may help to focus the attention of South Asian specialists on important elements that tie the larger system together, providing a comprehensive framework without which we would continue to flounder in a mass of apparently disconnected data and unorganisable information.

3. M. N. Srinivas and Andre Betellle, "Networks in Indian Social Structure," Man, 64 (1964), pp. 166 & 167.



Mahisamardini Durga.

FIVE

Goddess Sarala : A Case Study

The clearest way to illustrate the utility of the temple scheme presented in this study is to apply it to a particular case. For this purpose, I have selected a temple which will fit into the middle-range of the scheme. The point of this exercise is to illustrate how Sarala temple is embedded in a district level network of symbolic and social relations which only make sense when contrasted to religious institutions at both higher and lower levels in the continuum.

The analysis proceeds with a brief description of the temple and its antiquity. Next is a discussion of *jati* (caste), economic, and ritual patterns which identify the temple and its setting as a district level shrine in the sub-category of "temple-village". The following information is utilized to place Sarala temple in the continnum of sacred centers in coastal Orissa : (1) geographic scope of influence, (2) place in the sacred geography, (3) unique characteristics of the deity, and (4) significance of the shrine in fulfilling the needs of devotees.

Evolution of a Temple-Village :

Sarala Temple is well-known in coastal Orissa as a center of the *shakta* tradition (goddess worship)[1] . It is unique because of its close association with Sarala Das, the great Orissan poet who wrote the first *Mahabharata* in the Oriya language. Yet, like many other temples, it fits into a complex mosaic of rites and festivals that extend beyond the village.

Our first task is to place the temple into the scheme presented earlier. I would classify Sarala temple as a district level temple. It can be further defined as a "temple-village" because of the following characteristics : (1) The temple and the surrounding villages are inseparably

1. Non-Brahman castes play an important role in the services conducted at Jagannath temple. These non-Brahman "priests" have been observed throughout India. Stein (1974 : 28) notes their significant function as temple servants, particularly in South Indian goddess shrines.

entwined with one another. (2) Sarala temple dominates the economic, *jati* and ritual relationships within the village. (3) A market place has arisen in this district which is largely supported by the existence of the temple. (4) Sarala temple has a unique set of myths and rites which set it off from other temples of comparable size in the area. (5) The deity clearly dominates the surrounding district as the chief focus of worship. None of these characteristics alone would warrant classifying this as a "temple-village". The determining factor is the *combination* of all these identifying indicators in a single sacred center.

Sarala temple is located near the Mahanadi river, over 30 miles from the city of Cuttack. This is a heavily populated rural area with thousands of nucleated villages connected mainly by dirt roads, cutting across rich paddy fields. The temple is the major structural feature in the village of Kanakpur (about 2,000 persons). Most of the adult population has some kind of economic tie to the temple. Both Brahman and non-Brahman temple servants dominate the village social structure. Members of every *jati* have some important economic link to the temple.

The shrine of the goddess Sarala is medium size by comparison to others in the region. Most of the 530 acres of land owned by the temple is rented out to tenant farmers. Another portion is divided among temple servants (both Brahman and non-Brahman) who have inherited traditional rights to farm the land as partial

payment for performing temple duties[2]. A few acres are reserved for grazing of the 50 temple cows and cultivation of grains used in the preparation of *prasad* (sacred meals) for the deity.

Many village occupations are temple related. The numerous tea stall owners, restaurant proprietors, and merchants who sell religious articles, derive their occupations from hundreds of devotees in the surrounding district who attend the temple each week (from approximately a 30 mile radius). Also, the market on the outskirts of the village is heavily patronized by devotees who combine daily or weekly shopping with temple attendance.

Though no *single jati* is dominant in the village of Kanakpur. Brahmans, Khandayats and Rauls are more influential than others. Khandayats are usually landowners who sometimes have secondary occupations as merchants. Most Brahmans of Kanakpur serve in some capacity at Sarala temple; they are well respected, but fewer in number than the two other influential *jatis*. The Rauls are a Shudra *upa-jati* (sub-caste) claiming to have a tribal origin. They are temple servants by tradition, working alongside Brahmans, but with different functions. The Rauls are derived from tribal *Savaras* (once forest dwellers) who are attached to many other

2. "A Survey of Goddess Temples in Orissa". In *Religion in Modern India*. Edited by Giri Raj Gupta. (New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House), 1976.

Orissan temples; most noteworthy being the *Daitapatis,* a Shudra *upa-jati* (sub-caste) related to the Rauls, who perform important ceremonial functions at Jagannath temple, Puri[3]. Since non-Brahman "priests" are associated with many rural goddess temples in Orissa, there is nothing unique about the presence of the Rauls at Sarala temple. The significant difference here, as compared with other Orissan temples, is the degree of Raul influence over the management of the institution. Rauls *share* responsibilities with Brahmans in the conduct of services. In most other places Brahmans dominate non-Brahman temple servants. At Sarala temple there is an ideal traditional formula stating that there should be an equal number of Brahman and Raul families attached to the temple; but in fact, today there are approximately 25 Brahman and over 100 Raul families. These two *jatis* must share land, a portion of the *bhog*, and cash income from the temple. The imbalance between the two *jatis* is always a source of struggle, and, as in many temples, litigation is endemic.

This competition for dominance can be partially explained through an analysis of the complex folk history of Sarala temple. We are not interested here in historical accuracy, so much as the impact of folk

3. For an interesting description of the special role of non-Brahman "priests" (Daitapatis) in the periodic renewal of the Icon of Lord Jagannath at Puri, see Mishra (1971 : 139-141). The non-Brahman priests are discussed in some depth by Babb (1975 : 177-214). Also of interest in this connection is the possibility that Jagannath was originally a *Savara* god and was later adopted by the Aryan faiths of Jainism, Buddhism, Tantricism and Vaishnavism (Mansinha, 1962 : 2).

legends on how people interpret the significance of their temple and the appropriate relationships of service castes within it. The folk history of this temple-village pivots around the figure of Sarala Das. There seems little doubt that this Shudra visionary actually lived in or near the village of Kanakpur during the fifteenth century when Kapilendra Deva reigned as sovereign.

> Legend, corroborated by the poet's own assertions, has established that Sarala Das was born in the village of Jhankada in the present District of Cuttack. His descendents are still there scattered in the villages round about. He was a devoted worshipper of the goddess Sarala whose temple still stands in the village of Kanakapur, about a mile from his native village. Not far from this village the poet's *samadhi* still stands under a spreading banyan tree, an object of devotion and respect to people all around[4] .

Sarala Das was not well educated and seems to have grown up ignorant of Sanskrit. This fact contributes to ethnic and earthy qualities in the poet's versions of the *Mahabharata* and *Chandi Purana*[5] . He was the first to render these sacred texts into the Oriya language. Sarala Das changed the order of the original epics,

4 Mansinha, Mayadhar, *History of Oriya Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1962. p. 52.

5. Misra, Bhabagrahi, "Shakta Dharma O Odia Chandi Purana", in *Nava Jeevana*. IV,4/5 (1959), 274-277.

added many new characters and included scenes that reflected rural Orissan life at the time. This ethnic rendering of the sacred texts has made Sarala Das a celebrated and saintly figure in Orissan history.

According to legend, Sarala Das had a vision of the goddess Sarala, who, it is believed, *guided his hand* in writing the *Mahabharata* in Oriya. The question arises as to the reason for the goddess to appear before a Shudra. The original myth explaining the deity's first appearance on earth helps to solve the problem. According to the myth, Parashuram came to the area, started worshipping Sarala under a banyan tree and married the daughter of a Savara (the present day *Raul jati* serving in the temple). When Parashuram left the region on an India-wide pilgrimage, he gave responsibility for worshipping the goddess to the local Savaras, who built a temple for the deity. This establishes a clear and direct relationship of the goddess to people of lower *jatis* and explains why she would appear to a Shudra poet.

Today villagers rationalize Raul influence at Sarala temple by invoking the legend which gives this Shudra caste both rights and responsibilities for worshipping the goddess. After all, they reason, it is only appropriate that Shudras should carry on the tradition, as Sarala Das did when he was selected by the goddess to write the sacred texts. Some villagers even suggest that the Brahmans were imported within the last century by the Raja of Kujang who was the chief patron of Sarala

temple. Before that time, it is conjectured, the goddess was served by *Rauls* alone. It is claimed that the Raja of Kujang imported Brahmans to legitimize the cult of Sarala in the eyes of higher *jatis* within and outside the region. Certainly the importation of Brahmans occurred in other parts of Orissa, but there is no solid evidence to conclude that this happened at Sarala temple. Also, significant in the inter-*jati* conflict is the fact that the writings of Sarala Das include numerous humorous references to inept members of higher *jatis*. There is a long tradition in Orissa of celebrating an ideal equality of *jatis*. The writings of Sarala Das reveal his broad sympathies for people who are low in the social and *jati* hierarchy [6] .

Another conflict is related to the folk history of Sarala tradition. Three adjacent villages claim to be the legitimate place of origin for the temple. Apparently during Mogal rule the original temple was converted to a mosque and the icon of Sarala was hidden. The present temple at Kanakpur village was constructed at the end of Mogal dominance. People in a nearby village, where Sarala Das was supposed to have been born, claim that their village is the legitimate seat of the deity. A small shrine devoted to the goddess is located there. The contest between villages has created considerable local tension and divided loyalties in the district. This inter-village conflict may be one reason why the temple has not yet

6. Mansinha, p. 62.

taken on *regional* significance. People in the wider region may be reluctant to become involved in a parochial schism, despite the attraction of the temple due to its association with the poet Sarala Das.

Other deities in the village of Kanakpur include the *gram devi*, Jagulei, a goddess whose shrine is little attended. Also, there are several *svayambhu* (spontaneously generated) *Shiva lingas* on the outskirts of the village. People say these *lingas* are there because Shiva is Sarala's father. Though other deities are occasionally worshipped, they are of little importance by comparison to Sarala. Almost every tree, pond and clearing fits neatly with the elaborate mythology surrounding Sarala's emergence. A survey of village household shrines reveals that at least one, and often many, images of Sarala are in every domicile. She is the principle deity and is even worshipped by children in the village public school. This school is named after the goddess, children draw pictures of her and listen to stories about her appearance on earth.

Sarala is truly the paradigmatic sovereign of her domain[7] . People pay her the respect otherwise attributed to a royal personage. They turn to her, not only for

7. For an excellent analysis of the Hindu deity as a paradigmatic sovereign, see Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976 : 5) Also see Freeman (1977 : 51), Mahapatra (1978) and Kulke (1972 & 1976).

answers to crisis situations (such as curing diseases, soothing the pain of death and enhancing fertility), but also as a protective, yet beneficient and omnipresent, feudal land owner. All this indicates the overwhelming pre-eminence of Sarala within, and even beyond the village. On ceremonial occasions the rites at her temple spill into the village square, extend to adjacent villages, and knit together people of different *jatis* and classes throughout the district.

We have noted earlier that the presiding deity of a "temple-village" must have unique characteristics that attract people at the district level. I have already noted the unusual linkage of the temple to a famous historical Shudra poet. Of equal interest is the fact that the goddess Sarala is principally Mahasaraswati, Goddess of Learning. (She may also take other forms, such as Mahakali and Mahalaksmi). Large Saraswati shrines are rare in India. Also interesting is the peculiar mixture of Tantric and Vaishnavite elements in the puja. The temple sacraments include both *bel* (wood apple) and *tulsi* (basil) leaves. On top of the temple is a *chakra* (wheel of Visnu), yet until 1949 animal sacrifice was still conducted here[8]. Such sacrifices do not usually occur at purely Vaishnavite temples. There are several reasons for this curious mixture of Shakta and Vaishnavaite

8. Until 1949 a buffalo was offered to Sarala during Durga Puja. After Independence there was a local struggle to change this. Now substitutes, such as watermelons or cucumbers, replaced the sacrifice here, as in other temples where animals are no longer offered to the goddess.

styles of ritual in the temple ceremonies. Orissan religion was profoundly influenced by a brand of Vaishnavism which stressed : (1) hostility to the class of professional Brahman priests, (2) the right of Shudras to read the holy scriptures, (3) the use of the vernacular, and (4) a mixture of sectarian traditions, intended to lead devotees beyond the image of a deity, to the ultimate void beyond[9] . At Sarala temple we see an ideal mixture of Shakta and Vaishnavite elements that emerge from Orissan history.

The only way to make sense out of Sarala temple is by comparison to others above and below it in the Orissan hierarchy of sacred centers. At the district level, this "temple-village" is tied to the surrounding area through economic, *jati* and ritual links that reinforce each other. The first question to ask is who attends the temple. As mentioned earlier devotees come from a 30-mile radius. Those who attend weekly, however, come from a radius of no more than 10 miles. Usually temple attendance is combined with some other kind of business. Even those who patronize Sarala temple only once or twice per year, have relatives nearby, and gain some kind of religious merit or economic benefit (trade in the market place) by visiting the temple.

One indication of the religious significance of a goddess shrine is its place among the *shakti pithas* (seats of

9. Mansinha, pp. 88-89

the goddess) listed in sacred Sanskrit scriptures. These are places throughout India where parts of Sati's body are said to have fallen when the gods divided it into pieces[10]. When a goddess shrine is mentioned in this sacred literature it is usually of all-India, or at least regional importance[11]. Sarla temple is not listed in the Sanskrit sacred texts. However, each region in India has its own version of the sacral hierarchy of shrines within India. Some Orissans consider Sarala to be of all-India importance. This is because Sarala Das places such significance on the goddess Sarala in his Oriya versions of the sacred texts. A Sarala enthusiast illustrates this attempt to inflate the universality of a district level deity in a newspaper article :

> The whole of Orissa has been inspired by Sarala culture...*Sarala* is Orissa's Goddess of Learning and *Sarala pitha* is as well-known in India as a center of knowledge as Kasi... The culture of this area has influenced the whole of India ... Today Sarala culture has crossed the border, not only of Orissa, but also India, and touched the horizons of the United States. James Preston, a research scholar from the United States has come to *Sarala pitha* to study Sarala culture. Thus, a great element in India's culture will be exposed to the world[12].

10. For a full explanation of this Tantric myth as reflected in most *Puranas*, see Sircar (1948: 80) and Bharati (1963 : 147-167).
11. The only major Orissan goddess center mentioned in the classical *Puranas* is Biraja at Jajpur.
12. I have kept the name of the author of this article anonymous.

Here is an excellent example of how publicity universalizes a deity in modern India. Though Sarala temple remains a district level shrine today, it may eventually take a more prominent place in the hierarchy at the *regional* level. The individual who wrote the passage above, is one of numerous persons attempting to rekindle a sense of Orissan ethnic identity.

The next question is the relationship of Sarala temple to other shrines within the Orissan hierarchy. Table VIII illustrates the reciprocal interactions between different levels.

TABLE VIII

Place of Sarala Temple within the Orissan Temple Hierarchy

Level	Shrines
1. All South Asian	Jagannath (Puri)
	↓ ↑
2. Regional	Biraja (Jajpur)
	↓ ↑
3. District	→ Mangala → Sarala → Bhattarika →
	↑ ↓
	Numerous other district level goddess shrines
	↓ ↑
4. Local	→ Siva lingas → gram devi → Bila Sarala →
	↑ ↓
	Numerous small shrines in and around Kanakpur village
	↓ ↑
5. Domestic	Household shrines in Kanakpur village

Almost all sacred centers in coastal Orissa have been influenced in one way or another by the Jagannath cult at Puri (Level 1, all-South Asian shrines). Many temples have *direct* ritual relationships with the Jagannath complex, such as an exchange of visiting priests and distribution of dry Jagannath *mahaprasad*[13]. Other temples, like Sarala, have more *indirect* links with the Puri shrine. These temples follow Jagannath temple's calendar year and employ certain elements of ritual established at Puri. Though most people who patronize Sarala temple have attended the Puri shrine at some time, their principal deity is Sarala. Indeed, a few Sarala devotees would consider this goddess to be even more important for Orissa than Lord Jagannath. The all-India shrine at Puri, though significant symbolically, actually has little *direct* influence on Sarala temple.

A stronger vertical link exists (Level 2) between Sarala and the major regional goddess shrine of Orissa, Biraja at Jajpur. This shrine is a well-known *shakti pitha* mentioned in the classical Hindu scriptures. Though Biraja temple attracts some pilgrims from outside Orissa, most are from the surrounding region. The link of Sarala temple and Biraja at Jajpur is somewhat stronger than that with Puri. Nevertheless, it is still

13. The *Mahaprasad* from Jagannath temple at Puri is distributed throughout Orissa and even other parts of India. Babb (1975 : 61) observes the use of *mahaprasad* from Puri in Madhya Pradesh. Usually *mahaprasad* consists of dry grain preparations, *nirmalya* which can be easily preserved and used on special ceremonial occasions, linking a local shrine to the all-South Asian pilgrimage centre at Puri.

weaker than would be expected. Priests at Sarala temple occasionally visit and model rites after those practised at Biraja's shrine, yet there is little more interaction between the two shrines than this. One reason for this weak relationship is the distance of Jajpur from Kanakpur village (over 60 miles). Thus, the amount of travel between the two institutions is limited. More important than this, however, is the attempt of Sarala devotees to elevate the temple from a district to a regional level of prestige. People are more concerned with establishing Sarala's "rightful place" at the regional level than with using Biraja temple as a model for ritual emulation. Even if the Biraja shrine sets a symbolic pattern to be initiated at Sarala temple, this would be informal and erratic. Though regional level shrines in Orissa act as models for rites performed at lower level sacred centers, the pattern at a higher level filters down unevenly. Priests may visit regional temples and bring home new ideas; but they must also maintain (especially in district level temples) a degree of uniqueness specific to the tradition established in their own locality.

Another important set of relationships is between temples of the same magnitude—in this case, other district level shrines (Level 3). Most people can list 10 to 15 district level goddess shrines which are considered to be most sacred in coastal Orissa. Many of these goddesses were once the tutelary deities of Orissan *rajas* Others are noted because of the unique qualities of the deity Sarala temple is always mentioned as one of these. Orissa district level goddess shrines share certain common characteristics. They are similar in size, attract

devotees from approximately the same range within the surrounding district, and enjoy a considerable amount of interaction among priests and pilgrims, as they travel back and forth between shrines. Certain strong social and economic alliances have been made through intermarriage, linking the temples together horizontally. Sarala temple is well-known among devotees at other district level goddess shrines. This prestige makes the temple a likely candidate for eventual elevation in the hierarchy.

As we descend the scale to (Levels 4 and 5-Local and Domestic) it becomes evident that a middle range institution, like Sarala temple, has a strong, dominant and syncretic relationship to smaller shrines that form the infrastructure in the hierarchy. This contrasts with looser ties to higher level institutions[14]. We have noted earlier how all-pervasive Sarala is within the village and on the private altars within people's homes. The overwhelming presence of Sarala at these lower levels, unifies

14. The temple scheme presented earlier allows us to predict certain expected patterns within the hierarchy. A "temple-village" must establish only *loose* ties to higher level temples in order to maintain its uniqueness. On the other hand, one would expect those district level temples which have strong vertical ties to higher level shrines to fit into the sub-category of "special purpose shrines". These can specialize in something which attracts devotees, concentrate on that aspect of the deity, model every other element in the services after a higher level shrine, and gain some degree of legitimacy by direct contact with the regional and all-South Asian level institutions. This question cannot be answered until more systematic and careful research has been completed on a wide range of Hindu temples.

people at a district level. A similar integration at the regional level would require a temple to radiate even more allegiance, from a broader spectrum of persons, beyond ordinary district parochialism.

At the present time there is no accurate way to determine the exact number of devotees who attend Sarala temple during large festivals. However, some informants estimate that roughly 35 per cent come from three adjacent villages, with 60 per cent from a wider range. Only about 5 per cent come from other parts of Orissa (most of these were born in the district). Several recent developments may widen Sarala's scope in the future. These include : (1) a new *dharmasala,* (2) a new train link with the city of Cuttack (200,000 people) 30 miles away, (3) modernization of the yearly *mela* (including films, theatrical performances, and temporary exhibits made available by the recent electrification of the village), (4) increased awareness of Sarala Das as Orissa's exemplary poet, and (5) the extension and elaboration of the fire dancing ceremony, where men dressed as the goddess traditionally travel to other villages and cities in the region to call attention to their goddess.

If Sarala Das is such an important figure in Oriya literature, the question now arises as to why this temple has not evolved to atleast a regional level of importance. There are several reasons for this. In the first place, a genuine interest in rekindling Orissan culture is a recent development. Also, Kanakpur village has been slow to change old, more parochial, ways that have persisted for centuries. In 1962, the Chief Minister of Orissa

saw the potential of this temple, built a library next to the shrine, and erected a pillar in the village courtyard to mark the place as an important ethnic site in Orissan history. I believe it is only a matter of time before Sarala temple becomes a regional shrine. Even though it is located near two large urban centers, Cuttack (30 miles) and Bhubaneswar (50 miles), transportation remains very slow and rudimentary in this part of India; nor has urbanization expanded as rapidly as it has in other states. The gradual spread of Western style education may increase people's consciousness of their ethnicity and direct their attention more fully to historical figures like Sarala Das[15]. If this occurs in Orissa, then some district level shrines like Sarala temple, should evolve into regional level institutions, unifying larger groups of people than they presently do under a single set of divinely imbued ethnic symbols.

15. See Clothey (1972) for an example from Tamil Nadu in South India.

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